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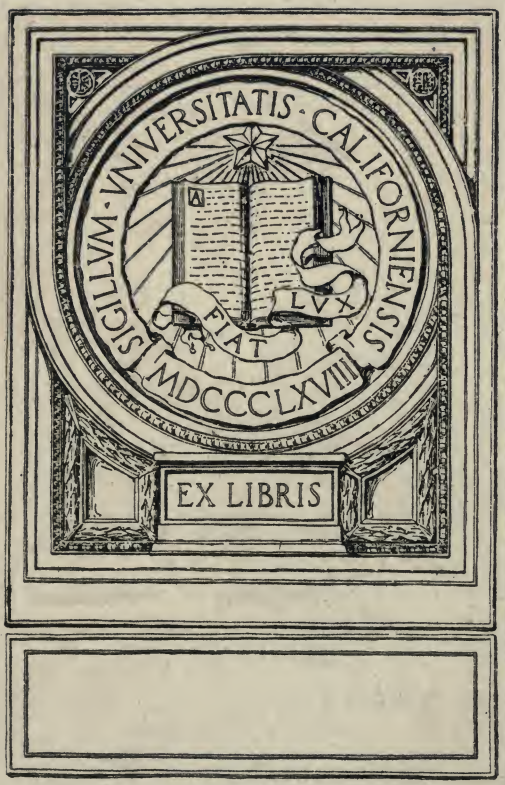
WHAT DOES HISTORY TEACH?

JOHN STUART BLACKIE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TWO EDINBURGH LECTURES

BY

JOHN STUART BLACKIE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

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EDINBURGH, *December* 1885.

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I.

THE STATE.

Ὥσπερ τελεωθὲν βέλτιστον τῶν ζῴων ἄνθρωπος οὕτω καὶ χωρισθὲν νόμου καὶ δίκης χείριστον πάντων.—ARISTOTLE.

HISTORY, whether founded on reliable record, or on monuments, or on the scientific analysis of the great fossil tradition called language, knows nothing of the earliest beginnings. The seed of human society, like the seed of the vegetable growth, lies under ground in darkness, and its earliest processes are invisible to the outward eye. Speculations about the descent of the primeval man from a monkey, of the primeval monkey from an ascidian, and of the primeval ascidian from a protoplastic bubble, though they may act as a potent stimulus to the biological research

of the hour, certainly never can form the starting-point of a profitable philosophy of history.

As revealed in history, man is an animal, not only generically different from, but characteristically antagonistic to the brute. That which makes him a man is precisely that which no brute possesses, or can by any process of training be made to possess. The man can no more be developed out of the brute than the purple heather out of the granite rock which it clothes. The relation of the one to the other is a relation of mere outward attachment or dependency — like the relation which exists between the painter's easel and the picture which is painted on it. The easel is essential to the picture, but it did not make the picture, nor give even the smallest hint towards the making of it. So the monkey, as a basis, may be essential to the man without being in any way participant of the divine indwelling λόγος which makes a man a man. The two are related only as all things are related, inas-

much as they are all shot forth from the great fountain-head of all vital forces, whom we justly call GOD.

The distinctive character of man as revealed in history is threefold. Man is an inventive animal, and he does not invent from a compulsion of nature, as bees make cells or as swallows build nests. These are all prescribed operations which the animal must perform; but the inventive faculty in man is free, in such a manner that the course of its action cannot be foreseen or calculated. It revels in variety, and, above all things, shuns that uniformity which is the servile province of brute activity. A man may live in a hole like a fox, but his proper humanity is shown by building a house and inventing a style of architecture. A man can sing like a bird, but—what the bird cannot do—he can make a harp or an organ. He can scrape with his nails like a terrier, but, as a man manifesting his proper manhood, he prefers to make a shovel of wood and a hatchet of stone or iron. The other animals, however

cunning, and often wonderfully adaptable in their instincts, are mere machines. Man makes machines. In this respect he is justly entitled to look upon himself as the God to the lower animals, just as the sheriff in the counties by delegated right represents the supreme authority of the Crown. But, above all things, man is a progressive animal,—not merely progressive as the grass grows from root to blade and from blade to blossom to perfect its individual type of vegetable life, but advancing from stage to stage and mounting from platform to platform for the perfectionation of the race; nor even progressive as plants and fruits are improved by culture and favourable surroundings, and what is called forcing, or as the breed of sheep and cattle is improved by selection. No doubt progress of this kind is made by man as well as by plants and brutes; but his most distinctive human progress is made, not by imposition from without, but by projection from within. These projections from within are what in philosophical language

is called the idea; they proceed from the essential nature of mind, whose imperial function it is to dictate forms, as it is the servile function of the senses to receive impressions. These intelligent forms, coming directly from the divine source of all excellence, and projected from within with sovereign authority to shape for themselves an outward embodiment, constitute what in art, in literature, in religion, and in social organisms, is called the ideal; and man may accordingly be defined as an animal that lives by the conception of ideals, and whose destiny it is to spend his strength, and, if need be, to lay down his life, for the realisation of such ideals. The steps of this realisation, often slow and painful, and always difficult, are what we mean by human progress; and it is the dominant characteristic of man, of which amongst the lower animals there is not a vestige, neither indeed could be; for so long as they have no ideas, neither reason nor the outward expression of reason in language — two things so closely bound together that the

wise Greeks expressed them both by one word, λόγος—so long must it be ridiculous to think of them shaping their career according to an inborn type of progressive excellence. To do so is exclusively human. Hence our poems, our high art, our churches, our legislations, our apostleships, our philosophies, our social arrangements and devices, our speculations and schemes of all kinds, which, though they are sometimes foolish, and always more or less inadequate, deliver the strongest possible proof that man is an animal who will rather die and embrace martyrdom than be content to live as the brutes do, neither spurred with the hope of progress nor borne aloft on the wings of the ideal.

Of the very earliest state of human society, as we have already said, history teaches nothing; but, as man is a progressive animal, and the plan of Providence with regard to him seems plain to let him shift for itself and learn to do right by blundering, as children learn to walk by tumbling, we may safely say that the easier,

more obvious, and more rude forms of living together must have preceded the more difficult, the more complex, and the more polished. And in perfect consistency with this presumption, we find three social platforms rising one above the other in human value, duly accredited either by monuments, by popular tradition, or by the evidence of comparative philology. These three are — (1) The prehistoric or stone period, from which such a rich store of monuments has been set up in the Copenhagen Museum, and the existence of which is indicated in Gen. iv. 22 as antecedent to Tubal Cain, the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. (2) The shepherd or pastoral stage, represented by Abel (Gen. iv. 2), in which men subsisted from the easy dominance which they asserted over wild animals, and from fruits of the earth requiring no culture. (3) The agricultural stage, when cereal crops were systematically and scientifically cultivated, which, of course, implied the limitation of particular districts of ground to particular

proprietors, and those agrarian laws which caused the Greek Demeter to be honoured with the title of θεσμοφόρος, or lawgiver—a step of marked and decided advance, insomuch that we may justly attribute to it the redemption of society from the *vagus concubitus* of the earliest times, and the firm establishment of the family, with all its sanctities and all its binding power, as the prime social monad. To the priestess of this goddess accordingly, amongst the Greeks, was assigned the function of ushering in the newly-married pair to the peculiar duties of their new social relation.[1]

The fact that the family is the great social monad, as it is undoubtedly one of the oldest and most accredited facts in human tradition, so it presents to us perhaps the most important of all the lessons that history teaches—a lesson as necessary to be inculcated at the present hour as at the earliest stages of social advance; and Aristotle certainly was never more in the right than when he emphasised this truth

[1] Plutarch conjugalia præcepta init.

strongly in traversing Plato's fancy of making the state the universal family, to the utter absorption of all subordinated family monads. Here, as in one or two other matters, the great idealist would be wiser than God; and so his philosophy, so far as that point was concerned, became only a more sublime attitude of folly. The importance of the family, as the divinely instituted social monad, depends manifestly on the happy combination and harmonious blending of authority and love which grow out of its constitution—two elements with the full development and true balance of which the well-being and happiness of all societies is intimately bound up. The fine moral training which the family relation alone can inspire we find not only at our own door, in the fidelity and self-sacrificing devotion of our noble Highlanders, who derived their inspiration from the clan system, of which the family love and respect is the binding element,[1] as contrasted

[1] The word *clan* is the familiar, well-known Celtic word for *children*.

with the slavish system of vassalage, the badge of feudalism; but in the habits and institutions of the three great ancient peoples to whom modern Europe owes its higher civilisation, Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, specially the last,[1] the great masters of the difficult art of government, who, to use Mommsen's phrase, carried out the unity of the family through the virtue of paternal authority "with an inexorable consistency," the beneficial effect of which could not fail to display itself in social life far beyond the sphere from which it originally emanated; for obedience to authority is the fundamental postulate of all possible societies. With the family, if not absolutely, certainly with the best and normal state of it, most closely connected is monogamy; for, though instances of bigamy and polygamy, from Lamech downwards (Gen. iv. 19) to King David and Solomon in the Old Testament history, crop up here and there in the oldest times,

[1] "Nulli alii sunt homines qui talem in liberos habeant potestatem qualem nos habemus." *Institut.* i. 9, 2.

and even in the post-Babylonian period, without any formal mark of disapprobation, yet it is quite certain that the Greeks and Romans were guided by a sound social instinct when they held the practice of bigamy to be inconsistent with the proper constitution of a family. What troubles are apt to arise from a multiplication of contending wives and ambitious mothers the latter story of King David tells in more unhappy episodes than one; and generally it may be laid down as one of the great lessons of history that polygamy, in every shape, is one of those acts of Oriental self-indulgence which may be sweet in the mouth but has a very strong tendency to be bitter in the belly, and therefore ought by all means to be avoided.

By the instinct of aggregation, which belongs to an essentially social animal, families will club together into townships or villages, and townships will be centralised into states. Humanity without townships would degenerate into

tigerhood, or whatever type of animal existence might express an essentially self-contained, solitary, and selfish creature; townships without that sort of headship which the word State implies, would make society cry halt at a stage of loosely-connected aggregates which would render common action for any high human purpose extremely difficult, and, in the general case, as human beings are, impossible. Hence the centralisation of the Attic townships at Athens in the legendary traditions of the Athenians attributed to Theseus;[1] hence also the lax confederation of the earliest Latin states under the headship of Albalonga; and, after the humiliation of that old stronghold, the more closely cemented union of those states under the hegemony of Rome.[2] What-

[1] Thucyd. ii. 15. The Athenians went further, and attributed to the son of Ægeus the creation of their democracy (Pausan., *Att.* iii.); but this, of course, was only the popular instinct, everywhere active, which loves to heap all graces upon the head of a favourite hero.

[2] See the words of the Latin league, Dionys. Hal. vi. 95, contrasting strongly with the original collection of

ever may be the evils connected with the growth of large towns, especially when, as in modern times, they have been allowed to swell to enormous magnitude without regulation or control, it is one of the undoubted lessons of universal history that the social stimulus necessary for the creation of vigorous thought, no less than the centralised force indispensable to great achievement, is found only in the large towns. The Christians were called Christians first at Antioch; and, had there been no Rome to unify a little Latium, there would have been no great Roman Empire to amalgamate the rude barbarians of the North with the smooth civilisation of the South by the force of a common law and a common language.[1]

The form of government natural to

autonomous villages described by Strabo, v. 229, *κατὰ κώμας αὐτονομεῖσθαι.*

[1] The influence of the great city in centralising the villages and making a state possible was in Greece philologically stereotyped by the fact that for *city* and *state* the language had only one word, *πόλις*. The *city* was the *state* in the same sense that the head is the body, for without the head no living body could be.

such infant states as the expansion of the original social monad, the FAMILY, is a loose but not unkindly mixture of monarchy, democracy, and aristocracy—the aristocracy being always the preponderating element. In the single family, of course, we have only the monarchical element in the father, and the democratic element in the children; but, as families expand into townships, it could not be but that the heads of the families composing it, partly from their age and experience, partly from the force of individual character, should form a sort of natural aristocracy, while the less notable and less prominent members would form the δῆμος, or great body of the constantly increasing multitude of the associated families. Below these three dominant elements of the body social, there would always be found a loose company of dependents and onhangers—the class called Θῆτες in Homer (Od., iv. 644), and in the Solonian constitution—who had no civic rights any more than the serfs and vassals of our medieval feudalism. The weakness

of the monarchical and the strength of the aristocratic elements in the early societies arose from the original equality of the heads of families, and from the jealousy with which they would naturally look on any functions of superiority exercised by any of their order naturally no better than themselves. The king, accordingly, like Agamemnon in Homer, would claim the homage which the title implies only for purposes of common action; and even in such cases would always be kept in check by a *βουλή*, or council of the aristocracy, of whose will properly he was only the executive hand; while the great mass of the people, occupied with the labours that belong to an agricultural and pastoral population, and unaccustomed to the large views which statesmanship and generalship require, would come together only on rare occasions of peculiar urgency.

The element in that loose triad of social forces that was first formulated into a more distinct type, and endowed with more imperative efficiency, was the kingship. The

power of the king was increased, which of course implies that the power of the people, and specially of the aristocracy, was diminished. And here let it be observed generally that the progress of civilisation in its natural and healthy career is the progress of limitation and the curtailment in various ways of that freedom which originally belonged to every member of the community. The tanned savage of the backwoods is the freest man in existence; next to him, the nomad or the wandering gipsy, such as may still be seen in their glory at St. James' fair in Kelso, whose house is at once his dwelling-place, his manufactory or place of business, and his travelling car; least free is the civilised citizen hemmed in on all sides by police-officers, soldiers, sentinels, door-keepers, and game-keepers, and the whole fraternity of dignified but unpopular officials of various kinds whose business it is to the general public to say No! This accretion of strength to the king proceeded first from his mere personal influence and the general deference paid

to him during the continuance of a prolonged and easily-exercised sovereignty; all classes, even the aristocracy, whose ambition is thus kept in check and their perilous enmities softened, feel the benefit of a wise head and a firm hand; but the party specially benefited by the kingship is the demos; for this body, from its position peculiarly liable to be trampled on by an insolent aristocracy, naturally looks up to the king as the father of the whole family, who, on his part, feels his position strengthened and his respect increased by performing with tact and firmness the delicate functions of a mediator. But the great social force which operates in giving prominence and predominance to the monarchy is WAR; and, though war is unquestionably an evil, it is an evil only as death is, and a form of dying accompanied not seldom with an exhibition of more manhood than the experience of many a peaceful deathbed can show. In fact, as stout old Balmerino said on the scaffold in 1746, "The man who is not ready to die is not fit

to live;" that is, we hold our life under the condition that we may at any time be called on to sacrifice it, whether for the preservation of our own self-respect, or for the integrity of the community of which we are a member. All great nations, in fact, have been cradled in war, the Hebrews no less than the Greeks and Romans; and it is only an amiable sentimentalism, pardonable in women, but inexcusable in men, that, in contemplation of the hard blows, red wounds, and gashed bodies with which war is accompanied, will allow itself to forget the hardihood, endurance, courage, self-sacrifice, and devotion to public duty, of which, under Providence, it has always been the great training school.[1] There is no profession that I know more favourable to the growth of noble sentiment and manly action than that of the soldier; and to its beneficial action in the formation of States

[1] ὁ στρατιωτικὸς βίος πολλὰ ἔχει μέρη τῆς ἀρετῆς.—Aristot. Pol. ii. 9. St. Paul also frequently in the Epistles, and Clemens Romanus (Oxon. 1633, p. 48) refers to the military profession as a great school of manly virtue.

every page of history bears flaming testimony. War, in fact, is the principal agent in producing that unification so absolutely necessary to social existence, but which is lost so soon as the headship of the common father of the expanded clan ceases to be recognised. Thus it was under the compulsion of war from their Lombardian neighbours on the west and Sclavonians on the east that the petty democratic communities, which after the disruption of the Roman Empire occupied the Venetian isles, found themselves, in the year 697, obliged to elect a king for life, wisely masking his absolute authority under the name of Doge or Duke. And in a similar fashion the situation of the Piedmontese, constantly forced to defend themselves against Gallican and Teutonic ambition, begot in them a stoutness of self-assertion and a general manhood of character which up to the present hour has placed them in favourable contrast to the inhabitants of the southern half of the peninsula; and the manhood displayed by the Counts of Savoy in assert-

ing their independence against great odds was no doubt the cause why, in the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, their lords were allowed to assume and maintain the title of kings—a circumstance which gave rise to the saying of Frederick the Great of Prussia, that the lords of Savoy were kings by virtue of their locality.[1] This is certainly true, not only of Sardinia, but of all States that ever rose above the loose aggregation of the original townships. It was the necessity of adjusting matters with troublesome neighbours that caused a perpetual succession of petty wars; and these could not be conducted without a prolongation of the power of the successful general, which acted practically as a kingship. The successful general in such times did not require to usurp a title which the people were forward to force upon him; and only a few, we may imagine, like Gideon (Judges viii. 22), had virtue enough to remain contented with the distinction belonging to a private station when the grace of the crown and the

[1] Spalding's *Italy*, ii. p. 284.

authority of the sceptre were formally pressed upon them by a grateful people. So in Greece we find an early kingship signalised by the names of Ægeus, Theseus, and Codrus; so in Rome a succession of seven kings, more or less distinctly outlined, the last of whom, Tarquin the Proud, stands forward as the head of the great Latin league, and entering in this capacity into a formal treaty with Carthage, the great commercial State of the Mediterranean. Closely connected with war, or, more properly, as the natural development of it in its more advanced stages, we must mention CONQUEST; that is, the violent imposition of the results of a foreign civilisation on the native social foundations of any country. Here, no doubt, there may often be on the conquering side something very different from a manly self-assertion—viz. self-aggrandisement at the expense of an innocent neighbour, greed of territory, lust of power, and the vanity of mere military glory, which our brilliant neighbours the

French were so fond to have in their mouth. The virtue of war as a training school of civic manhood does by no means exclude the operation of many forces far from admirable in their motive; and it is the presence of these unholy influences, no doubt piously brooded over, that has generated in the breasts of our mild friends the Quakers that anti-bellicose gospel which they preach with such lovable persistency. But whatever the motives of famous conquerors have been, the results of their achievements in the great history of society have been most important. The imposition of a foreign type on the peoples of Western Asia by the brilliant conquests of Alexander the Great, gave to the whole of that valuable part of the world, along with the rich coast of Northern Africa, a common medium of culture of the utmost importance to the future civilisation of the race. The imposition of the Norman yoke 900 years ago on this island gave to the contentious Saxon kingdoms, by a single vigorous stroke from without, that social

consistency which the bloody strife of five centuries of petty kings and kinglets among themselves had failed to produce; while in India the imposition of the most highly advanced mercantile and Christian civilisation of the West on crude masses of an altogether diverse type of Asiatic society, presents to the thoughtful student of history a problem of assimilation of an altogether unique character, the final solution of which, under the action of many complex forces, no most sagacious human intellect at the present moment can divine. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the blessings which conquest brings with it, when vigorously managed and wisely used, are lightly turned into a bane whenever the power which has the force to conquer has not the wisdom to administer; of which unblissful lack of administrative capacity and assimilating genius the conquests of the Turks in Europe, and of the English in Ireland, present a most instructive example.

The monarchies created in the above

fashion, by the combination of old patriarchal habits with military necessities, however firmly rooted they may appear at the start, carry with them a certain germ of dissatisfaction, which, under the influence of popular irritability, seriously endangers their permanence, and may at any time break up their consistency. The causes of such dissatisfaction are chiefly the following :—(1) The original motive for creating a king, the pressure of foreign war, as war cannot last for ever, in time of peace will cease to operate, and the instinct of individual liberty, which belongs to all men, unless when violently stamped out, will revive, and cause the subjection of all men to the will of one to be looked on with disfavour. (2) This feeling will be specially strong with the ἄριστοι, or natural aristocracy, whose individual importance must diminish as the power of the king increases. (3) A great danger will arise from the fixation of the order of succession to the throne. The natural tendency will be to follow the example of succession in

private families, and recognise the right of the son to walk into the public heritage of his father; but the additional influence thus given to the king will have a tendency to sharpen the jealousy of the nobles. And, again, the son may be a weakling or a fool, and utterly unfit to play the part of a supreme ruler with that mixture of intelligence, firmness, and tact which the royal function for its fair and full action requires. (4) And if, in order to avoid these evils, the elective principle is maintained, either absolutely or within certain limits, the tendency to faction inherent in all aristocracies, stimulated by the potent spur of a competition for power, will be increased; and this factious yeast will work so potently in the blood of the nobles that they will either reduce the power of the king to a mere name, and change the government into an exclusive oligarchy, as in Venice, or they will even go the length of calling in foreign arbiters to heal their dissensions, which, as in the case of Poland, will naturally end in subjection to some foreign

power; or, lastly, they will dispense with the kingship altogether, and return to their original mixture of aristocracy and democracy with more firmly-defined functions and more reliable guarantees. (5) This result may be precipitated by some outbreak of that insolence which is so naturally fostered by the possession of absolute power; the sacredness of personal property and the reverence of ancestral possession will not be respected by some Ahab of the day; some young Tarquin or Hipparchus may cast his lustful eye on the fair daughter of an humble citizen; and then will be unsheathed the sword of a Brutus, and then uprise the song of a Harmodius and Aristogeiton, which will sound a long knell to monarchy, during the manhood of a free, an independent, a self-reliant, and a self-governing people.

The system of self-government thus introduced, as the natural fruit of the elements out of which it arose, would be a mixture of aristocracy and democracy, with a decided predominance of the former ele-

ment at starting, but with a gradually increasing momentum on the side of the inferior factor in proportion as the mass of the people excluded from aristocratic privileges by a necessary law of social growth advanced in numbers and in social importance. Greece and Rome, or rather Athens and Rome, present to us here two types from which important lessons may be learned. In both the discarding of the kings was the work of the aristocracy; but, while the germ of the democratic element was equally strong in both, in Athens, partly from the genius of the people, partly from peculiar circumstances, this germ blossomed into an earlier, a more marked, and a more characteristic manhood; whereas in Rome, in the most brilliant period of its political action, the form of government might rather be defined as a strong aristocracy limited by a strong democracy than a pure democracy, to which category Athens undoubtedly belongs. In both States the aristocratic element did not submit to the necessary

curtailment of its power without a struggle; but in Athens the names of Solon (600 B.C.), Clisthenes, Aristides, and Pericles distinctly marked the early formation of a democracy almost totally purged from any remnant of aristocratic influence, at an epoch in its development corresponding to which we find Rome pursuing her system of world-wide conquest under a system of compromise between the patrician and the plebeian element, similar in some sort to what we see before our eyes at the present moment in our own country. To Athens, therefore, we look, in the first place, for an answer to the question, What does history teach in regard to the virtue of a purely democratic government? And here we may safely say that, under favourable circumstances, there is no form of government which, while it lasts, has such a virtue to give scope to a vigorous growth and luxuriant fruitage of various manhood as a pure democracy. Instead of choking and strangling, or at least depressing, the free self-assertion of the individual, by

which alone he feels the full dignity of manhood, such a democracy gives a free career to talent and civic efficiency in the greatest number of capable individuals; but it does not follow that, though in this regard it has not been surpassed by any other form of government, it is therefore absolutely the best of all forms of government. All that we are warranted to say is, as Cornewall Lewis does,[1] that without a strong admixture of the democratic spirit humanity in its social form cannot achieve its highest results; of which truth, indeed, we have the most striking proof before our eyes in our own happy island, where, even before the time which Mr. Green happily designates as Puritan England, powerful kings had received a lesson that as they had been elected so they might be dismissed from office by the voice of London burghers. Neither, on the other hand, does it follow from the shortness of the bright reign of Athenian democracy—not more than 200 years from Clisthenes to

[1] *On Method in Political Science.*

the Macedonians — that all democracies are short-lived, and must pay, like dissipated young gentlemen, with premature decay for the feverish abuse of their vital force. Possible no doubt it is that, if the power of what we may call a sort of Athenian Second Chamber, the Areiopagus, instead of being weakened as it was by Aristides and Pericles, had been built up according to the idea of Æschylus and the intelligent aristocrats of his day, such a body, armed, like our House of Lords, with an effective negative on all outbursts of popular rashness, might have prevented the ambition of the Athenians from launching on that famous Syracusan expedition which exhausted their force and maimed their action for the future. But the lesson taught by the short-lived glory of Athens, and its subjugation under the rough foot of the astute Macedonian, is not that democracies, under the influence of faction, and, it may be, not free from venality, will sell their liberties to a strong neighbour—for aristocratic Poland did this in a

much more blushless way than democratic Greece—but that any loose aggregate of independent States, given more to quarrel amongst themselves than to unite against a common enemy, whether democratic, or aristocratic, or monarchical in their form of government, cannot in the long run maintain their ground against the firm policy and the well-massed force of a strong monarchy. Athens was blotted out from the map of free peoples at Chæronea, not because the Athenian people had too much freedom, but because the Greek States had too little unity. They were used by Philip exactly in the same way that Napoleon used the German States at the commencement of the present century. DIVIDE ET INFERA is the politician's most familiar maxim, which, when wisely and persistently applied, whether by an ancient Macedonia or a modern Russia, will always give a strong monarchy a decided advantage over every other form of government. Surround me with a belt of petty principalities, says the despot, however highly

civilised and however well governed, and I shall know to make them play my game and work themselves into confusion, till the hour comes when I may appear as a god to allay by my intervention the troubles which I have fostered by my intrigues.

So much for Athens. Let us now see what lessons are to be learned from ROME. And here, on the threshold, it is quite plain that the abolition of kingship goes in the first place to strengthen the aristocracy, on whom as a body the supreme functions exercised by the monarch naturally devolve. The highly aristocratic type of the early Roman republic, unlimited from above by any superior power, and with only a slight occasional check from a plebeian citizenship in the tender bud, is universally admitted. Plainly enough also it stands written on the face of the early history of the Commonwealth that the administration of the aristocracy was marked in no ordinary degree by all that exclusiveness, insolence, selfishness, and rapacity, which are the besetting sins of an order of men

cradled in hereditary conceit, and eating the bread not of labour, but of privilege, "*das unverbesserliche Junkerthum*," as Mommsen calls them. To such an extent did they abuse the natural vantage ground of their social position that, while the great body of the substantial yeomanry, who shed their blood in a constant succession of petty wars for the safety of the State, were stinted of their natural reward and degraded from their rightful position, the insolent monopolisers of all dignities and privileges did not blush to take from the people their natural heritage in the public land, and, for the enlargement of their own order, to deprive the State of its stoutest citizens, and the army of its most effective soldiers. The irritation produced by this insolent and anti-social procedure of the old Roman landlords, by the law of reaction common to all forces, produced as its natural consequence a revolt; for, as it has been truly said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, no less true is it in all history that the insolence of the aristocracy

is the cradle of the democracy. That happened accordingly in ancient Rome which Sismondi prophesied might happen in modern Scotland: "If the mighty thanes who rule in those trans-Grampian regions begin to think that they can do without the people, the people may begin to think they can do without them."[1] So at least the Roman plebs thought when, in the year of the city 259, they marched in a body out to the Sacred Mount on the banks of the Anio, and refused to return to the city till their just claims had been conceded and their wrongs redressed. Their wrongs were redressed: conferences, concessions, and compromises, in a hurried and blundering sort of way, were made; tribunes of the plebs were appointed, with the absolute power of stopping the whole machinery of the State with a single negation; and thus was sown the seed of a democracy destined to grow into monstrous proportions, and ripen into the bloody blossom of a military despotism by

[1] Sismondi, *Etudes sur l'economie politique*, Essai iv.

the hands of the very class of persons who were chiefly interested in preventing it.

The different stages of the battle between plebeians and patricians, or, as we term it, Whig and Tory, as they evolved themselves by a social necessity from time to time, belong to the special history of Rome, not to the general philosophy of history with which we are here concerned. The seed of democracy sown at the Sacred Mount went on from one stage of expansion to another, breaking down every barrier of hereditary privilege between the mass of the people and the old aristocracy, till it ended in the *Lex Hortensia*, passed B.C. 288, which gave to all ordinances passed by the *Comitia Tributa*—that is, the people assembled in local tribes and voting independently of all aristocratic check or co-operation—the full validity of law. And in this progress of equalisation between class and class in a community, the Muse of history sees only a special illustration of a general law that every aristocracy contending for the maintenance of exclusive

privilege against natural right fights a losing battle. But the necessity of the adjustment of the opposing claims of a conservative and a progressive body in the State is a very different thing from the fashion in which the adjustment may be made, and from the consequences that may grow out of the adjustment. Here there is room for any amount of wisdom, and unfortunately also for a large amount of blundering. No man can say that the Roman constitution as it stood, after the plebeians had broken through all aristocratic barriers, was a cunningly compacted machine, or that it afforded any strong guarantee against that degeneracy into licence towards which all unreined democracies naturally tend. But one thing certainly was achieved. Out of the plebeian and patrician elements of the body social, no longer arrayed in hostile attitude, but fronting one another with equal rights before the law, and adjusting their forces in a fairly-balanced equilibrium, there was formed a great political corpora-

tion, deliberative and administrative, which for independence, dignity, patriotism, and sagacity, used its authority in such a masterly style and to such world-wide issues that it has earned from Mommsen the complimentary acknowledgment of having been "the first political corporation of all times."[1] This corporation was the Roman Senate, which ruled the policy of Rome for a period of 200 years, from the passing of the Hortensian Law through a long period of African and Asiatic wars down to the civil war of Sulla and Marius, 88 B.C.—a body of which we may perhaps best easily understand the composition and the virtue if we imagine the best elements of our House of Commons and the best elements of the House of Lords merged in one Supreme Assembly of practical wisdom, to the exclusion at once of the feverish factiousness and multitudinous babble of the one assembly, and the brainless obstructiveness and incurable blindness of

[1] With which sentence Mr. Freeman agrees. *Comparative Politics*, Lecture iii. p. 78.

hereditary class interests in the other. But there was something else in the mixed constitution of Rome besides the tried wisdom and the great practical weight of the Senate. What was that? There was, in the first place, the evil of an elective kingship — for the Consul was really an annual king under a different name, as the President of the United States is a quadriennial king, with greatly more power while his kingship lasts than the Queen of Great Britain; and this implied an annual fit of social fever, and the annual sowing of a germ of faction ready to shoot into luxuriance under the strong stimulant of the love of power. Then, as in the natural growth of society, a new aristocracy grew up, formed by the addition of the wealthy plebeian families to the old family aristocracy, and along with it a new and numerous plebeian body, practically though not legally excluded from the privilege of the *optimates*, the old antagonism of patrician and plebeian would revive, and the question arose, What machinery had the

legislation of the previous centuries provided to prevent a collision and a rupture between the antagonistic tendencies of the democratic and oligarchic elements in the State? The answer is, None. The authority of the Senate, great as it was both morally and numerically, was antagonised by the co-equal legislative authority of the *Comitia Tributa*—an assembly as open to any agitator for factious or revolutionary purposes as a meeting of a London mob in Hyde Park, and composed of elements of the most motley and loose description, ready at any moment to give the solemn sanction of a national ordinance to any act of hasty violence or calculated party move which might flatter the vanity or feed the craving of the masses. But this was not all. The tribunate, originally appointed simply for the protection of the commonalty against the rude exercise of patrician power, had now grown to such formidable dimensions that the popular tribune of the day might become the most powerful man in the State, and only require

re-election to constitute him into a king whose decrees the consuls and the senators must humiliate themselves to register. Here was a machinery cunningly, one might think, constructed for the purpose of working out its own disruption, even supposing both the popular and aristocratic elements had been composed of average good materials. But they were not so. In the age of the Gracchi, 133 B.C., the high sense of honour, the proud inheritance of an uncorrupted patrician body, and the shrewd sense and sobriety of a sound-hearted yeomanry, had equally disappeared. The aristocracy were corrupted by the wealth which flowed in from the spoils of conquest; they had become lovers of power rather than lovers of Rome; lords of the soil, not fathers of the people; banded together for the narrow interests of their own order rather than for the general well-being of the community. The sturdy yeomanry again, of which the mass of the original popular assemblies had been composed, had partly dwindled

away under maladministration of the public lands, and partly were mixed up with motley groups of citizens of no fixed residence, and of a town rabble who could be induced to vote for anything by any man who knew to win their favour by a large distribution of Sicilian corn or the exciting luxury of gladiatorial shows; in a word, the *populus* had become a *plebs*, or, in our language, the people a populace. Furthermore, let it be noted that this people or populace, tied down to meet only in Rome, as the high seat of Government, was called upon to deal with the administration of countries as far apart and as diverse in character as Madrid and Cairo, or Bagdad and Moscow are from London. Think of a mob of London artisans, on the motion of a Henry George, or even a rational Radical like Mr. Chamberlain, drummed together to pass laws on landed property and taxation through all that vast domain! But so it was; and most unfortunately also the original fathers of the agitation which, at the time of the

Gracchi, ranged the great rulers of the world into two hostile factions, stabbing one another in the back and cutting one another's throats, and plotting and counter-plotting in every conceivable style of baseness, after the fashion which is now being exemplified before us in Ireland,—the authors of this agitation were not the demagogues, but the aristocracy; as indeed in all cases of general discontent, social fret, and illegal violence, the parties who are accused of stirring class against class are not the agitators who appear on the scene, but the maladministrators who made their appearance necessary. Man is an animal naturally inclined to obey and to take things quietly; insurrection is too expensive an affair to be indulged in by way of recreation; and there is no truth in the philosophy of history more certain than that whenever the multitude of the ruled rebel against their rulers, the original fault —I do not say the whole blame, for as things go on from bad to worse there may be blame and blunders on both sides

—but the original fault and germinative cause of discontent and revolt unquestionably lies with the rulers. Whatever may be said about Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, there can be no doubt that in the case of Rome the original cause of the democratising of the old constitution and the over-riding of senatorial authority by tribunician ordinances was the senators themselves, who, in direct contravention of the public law of the State, with that greed for more land which is the besetting sin of every aristocracy, had quartered themselves, after the fashion of colonial squatters, on the public lands, and refused to surrender them to the State till compelled by the cry of popular right against might, raised by such patriotic and self-sacrificing agitators as the Gracchi—patriotic men who attained their object at last by the only means in their power, but means so drastic that, like doctor's drugs, they drave out one devil by bringing in a score, and paid for the partial healing of an incurable disease by

destroying for ever the balance of the constitution, and inaugurating with their own martyr blood one of the most woeful epochs in human history—an epoch varied by periodical assassinations and consummated by wholesale butcheries.

I said the Gracchi attained their object, and that by appointing a Commission for a distribution of the public lands, such as the friends of the crofters in the Highlands now propose for the repeopling of the old depopulated homes of the clan. But I said also that the disease under which Rome laboured was incurable. How was this? Simply because, whatever might have been the merits of the special Agrarian Law carried by the Gracchi, the violent steam by which the State machine was moved remained the same, the clumsy machine itself remained, and the materials with which it had to deal in a long and critical course of foreign conquest became every year larger and more unmanageable. It was not to be expected either, on the one hand, that a strong and influential

aristocracy should die with a single kick, or, on the other, that a democracy, which had once learned the power of a popular flood to break down aristocratic dams, would cease to exercise that power when a convenient occasion offered. And so the strife of oligarchic and plebeian factions continued. The political struggle, as always happens in such cases, became a struggle for personal supremacy; the sanguinary street battle between the younger Gracchus and the Consul Opimius, though followed by a lull for a season, was renewed after a few years in more startling form and much bloodier issues, first between Marius and Sulla, and finally between Cæsar and Pompey. Such a succession of embittered civil wars could end only in exhaustion and submission; and this is the last emphatic lesson which the history of Rome has taught to the governors of the people. Every constitution of mixed aristocratic and democratic elements which fails by kindly control on the one side, and reasonable demand on

the other, to achieve that balance of those antagonising forces which means good government, must end in a military despotism. That which will not bridle itself must be bridled; and when constant irritation, fretful jars, and cruel collisions are the bloody fruit of unchastened liberty, slavery and stagnation seem not too high a price to pay for peace.

I have enlarged on the development and decay of the Roman republic, not only because in point of political achievement Rome is by far the most notable of the great States of the world, but because in the struggle between aristocracy and democracy which was the salient feature of its history from the expulsion of the kings to the battle of Actium, it presents a very close and instructive parallel to what has been going on amongst ourselves from the revolution settlement of 1688 to the present hour. If for annual kings with large power we put hereditary kings with small power, the

parallel is complete.[1] Let us now cast a glance, for time and space allow us no more, over some modern developments. The modern States of Europe have good reason, upon the whole, to think themselves fortunate in their having retained the kingship, which the Greeks and Romans rejected, either as their original type, or elevated and glorified from the dukedoms, margravates, and electorates with which they started. There cannot be much doubt, I imagine, that, if the Romans had retained their king in a hereditary or nearly hereditary form, he might have exercised a mediatorial function between the contending parties that would have prevented those bloody strifes and those ugly civic wounds with which the record of their political career stands now so sorrowfully defaced. In the experience of their own earliest story, Servius Tullius had already shown them how a king in the strife of classes might step in by a

[1] This parallel has been noticed by the thoughtful Germans; see particularly Zacharia Sulla, i. 40.

peaceful new model to open the ranks of a close aristocracy with dignity and safety to a rising democracy; and in modern times the case of Leopold II. of Tuscany does not stand alone as an example of what good service a wise king may do in the adjustment of contending claims and smoothing the march of necessary social transitions. In fact, the most democratic people amongst the ancients, in order to effect such an adjustment in a peaceful way, had been obliged to make Solon a king for the nonce; and the Romans, urged by a like social pressure, named their dictator, or re-elected their consuls and their tribunes, in order to secure for the need of the moment that unity of counsel, energy of conduct, and moral authority which is the grand recommendation of the kingship. No doubt kings in modern as in ancient times have erred; they have not been able always to keep themselves sober under the intoxicating influence of absolute power, and they have paid dearly for their errors; but we

were wise in this country, while beheading one despot and banishing another, to punish the offender without abolishing the office. True, a thorough-going and sternly-consistent republican may ask, with an indignant sneer, What is the use of a king, when we have shorn him of all honours save the grace of a crown and the bauble of a sceptre—reduced him, in fact, to a mere machine to register the decrees of a democratic assembly? But such persons require to be reminded that there is nothing more dangerous, not only in political, but in all practical matters, than logical consistency; that the most narrow-minded people are always the most consistent, and this for the very obvious reason that they have only room for one idea in their small brain chambers, whereas God's world contains many ideas, stiff ideas too, and given to battle, which must be brought into some friendly balance or compromise, or set about throat-cutting on a large scale—a process to which consistent republicans have never shown a less bloody inclination

than consistent monarchists. They must be reminded also that the person of the monarch is an incarnated, visible, and tangible symbol of the unity of the nation, of which parties and factions are so apt to be forgetful; and if our logically-consistent republican may look on this as a matter of association and sentiment which he will not acknowledge, he must simply be told that the man who does not acknowledge the important place played by associations and sentiments in all matters of Church and State knows nothing of human nature, and is altogether unfit for meddling with the difficult and dangerous art of politics. He may write books, and lecture to coteries, and harangue electoral meetings, and delight himself largely in the reverberation of his own wisdom, but by all means let him not be a prime minister. To what ends logical consistency can lead a politician in high places Charles I. and Archbishop Laud learned when it was too late; and the fate of these two high-perched worthies stands as a speaking lesson to

all politicians, whether of the democratic or the monarchical type, how easy a thing it is for a man to be a good Christian and a consistent thinker, and yet on all political matters a perfect fool.

Among the notable modern States three stand before us with an exceptional preference for the democratic form of government—Switzerland, France, and the great trans-Atlantic Republic. These must be regarded with curious interest and kindly human sympathy as great social experiments, by no means to be prejudged and denounced by any sweeping conclusions made from the unfortunate breakdown of the two celebrated ancient republics. The experiment in these cases, as made in altogether different circumstances and under different conditions, cannot warrant any such denunciations. The representative system which now universally prevails, and which enables a most widely-scattered and diverse-minded population to vote with a coolness and a precision and a large survey of which the urban system of Greece and

Rome never dreamed; the general growth of intelligence among all classes through the action of cheap education and the large circulation of cheap books; the rapid and ever more rapid travelling of contagious thought from the centre to the extreme limbs and flourishes of social unities; and, above all, let us hope the improved tone of social feeling in all the relations of man to man, which we owe to the great Christian principle of living as brother with brother, and sister with sister, under a common heavenly fatherhood, —these are all forces largely operating in the present day which justify us in hoping that many a social experiment which signally failed with the ancients may be crowned in the centuries which are now being inaugurated with encouraging success. Of the three which we have named, Switzerland is the country in which, from topographical peculiarities, the interests of jealous neighbours, and the traditional habits of a peasant population well trained to provincial self-government, the per-

manence of a democratic federation may be prophesied with the greatest safety, but at the same time with the least interest to the general march of humanity. Ancient Rome, had it continued as compact and as little disturbed by external forces and internal fermentations as modern Switzerland, might have remained during the whole course of its career as sober-minded and as stable as in the days of Cincinnatus, and the yeomanry which were displaced by huge absentee landlords, and Syrian or Sicilian slaves. The case of France is altogether different. A republic in an over-civilised, highly-centralised, bureaucratically-governed country, with a religiously hollow, hasty, violent, excitable, and explosive people, seems of all social experiments the least hopeful: and that is all that can wisely be said of it at present. But the social conditions in America are altogether different; and the experiment of a great democratic republic for the first time in the history of the world —for Rome in its best times, as we have

seen, was an aristocracy—will be looked on by all lovers of their species with the most kindly curiosity and the most hopeful sympathy. Here we have the stout, self-reliant, sober-minded Anglo-Saxon stock, well trained in the process of the ages to the difficult art of self-government; here we have a constitution framed with the most cautious consideration, and with the most effective checks against the dangers of an over-riding democracy; here also a people as free from any imminent external danger as they have unlimited scope for internal progress. Under no circumstances could the experiment of self-government, on a great scale, have been made with a more promising start. No doubt they have a difficult and slippery problem to perform. The frequent recurrence of elections to the supreme magistracy has always been, and ever must be, the breeder of faction, the nurse of venality, and the spur of ambition. Once already has this Titanic confederacy, though only a hundred years

old, by going through a process of a long, bitter, and bloody civil war, shown that the unifying machinery so cunningly put together by the conservative genius of a Washington, an Adams, and a Madison, was insufficient to hold in check the rebellious forces at war within its womb. No doubt also it were in vain to speak America free from those acts of gigantic jobbing, blushless venality, and over-riding of the masses in various ways, which were working the ruin of Rome in the days of Jugurtha. The aristocracy of gold and the tyranny of capitalists in Christian New York has shown itself no less able to usurp the public land and defraud the people of their share in the soil than the lordly aristocracy and the slave-dealing magnates of heathen Rome. Nevertheless we need not despair. The sins of American democracy may serve as a useful hint to us not rashly to tinker our own mixed constitution without waiting for a verdict on issues, which, as Socrates wisely says, lie with the gods; nor, on the other hand,

is there any wisdom in ascribing to the American form of government evils which, as belonging to human nature, crop up with more or less abundance under all forms of government, and which may be specially rife among ourselves. We also have our Glasgow banks, our bubble companies of all kinds, our heady speculations, our hot competitions, our over-productions, our haste to be rich, our idol worship of mere material magnificence,—these are evils, and the root of all evil, with the production of which no form of government has anything to do, and against which every form of government will be in vain invoked to contend.

In conclusion, we must bear in mind that democracy or social self-government is the most difficult of all human problems, and must be approached, not with inflated hopes and rosy imaginations, but with sobriety and caution and a sound mind, and at critical moments not without prayer and fasting. Before entering on any scheme for rebuilding our social edifice on a demo-

cratic model, we should consider seriously what a democracy really implies, and what we may reasonably promise ourselves from its possible success. Of the two rallying cries which have made it a favourite with persons given to change, equality and liberty, the one is no more true than that all the mountains in the Highlands are as high as Ben Nevis, and can only mean at the best that all men have an equal right to be called men and to be treated as men, while the other is only true so far as concerns the removal of all artificial barriers to the free exercise of each man's function, according to his capacity and opportunities. But this is a mere starting-point in the social life of a great people. When the bird is out of the cage, which it must be in order to be a perfect bird, the more serious question emerges, what use it shall make of its newly-acquired liberty. Here certainly to men, as to birds, there are great dangers to be faced; and with nations the progress of society, as already remarked, is measured to a much larger extent by the increase of

limitations than by the extension of liberties. Then, again, the fundamental postulate of extreme democracy that the majority have everywhere a right to govern is manifestly false. No man as a member of society has a natural right to govern: he has a right to be governed, and well governed; and that can only be when the government is conducted by the wisest and best men who compose the society. If the numerical majority is composed of sober-minded, sensible, and intelligent persons who will either govern wisely themselves or choose persons who will do so, then democracy is justified by its deeds; but if it is otherwise, and if, when an appeal is made to the multitude, they will choose the most daring, the most ambitious, and the most unscrupulous, rather than the most sensible, the most moderate, and the most conscientious, then democracy is a bad thing, at least nothing better than the other *ocracies* which it supplants. It is manifest, therefore, that of all forms of government democracy is that which imperatively requires

the greatest amount of intelligence and moderation among the great mass of the people, especially amongst the lower classes, who have always been the most numerous; and, as history can point to no quarter of the world where such a happy condition of the numerical intelligence has been realised, it cannot look with any favour on schemes of universal suffrage, even when qualified with a stout array of effective checks. The system, indeed, of representing every man individually, and giving every member of a society a capitation vote, as they have a capitation tax in Turkey, however popular with the advocates of extreme democracy, seems quite unreasonable. What requires to be represented in a reasonable representative system is not so much individuals as qualities, capacities, interests, and types. Every class should be represented, rather than every man in a class. Besides, the equality of votes which democracy demands, on the principle that I am as good as you and perhaps a little better, is utterly false, and tends to

nourish conceit and impertinence, to banish all reverence, and to ignore all distinctions in society. Anyhow, there can be no doubt that great masses of men acting together on exciting occasions are peculiarly liable to hasty resolutions and violent opinions; all democracies, therefore, are unsafe which are unprovided with checks in the form of an upper chamber composed of more cool materials, and planted firmly in a position that makes them independent of the fever and faction of the hour. A strong democracy stands as much in need of an aristocratic rein as a strong aristocracy does of a democratic spur. And let it never be forgotten—what democracies are far too apt to forget—that minorities have rights as well as majorities; nay, that one of the great ends to be achieved by a good government is to protect the few against the natural insolence of a majority glorying in its numbers, and hurried on by the spring-tide of a popular contagion. A state of society is not at all inconceivable in which the many shall make all the laws

and monopolise all the offices of a fussy bureaucracy, while the few are burdened with all the taxes. Never too frequently can we repeat, in reference to all public acts, no less than to the conduct of individuals in private life, the great Aristotelian maxim that ALL EXTREMES ARE WRONG; that every force when in full action tends to an excess which for its own salvation must be met by a counterpoising force; that all good government, as all healthy existence, is the balance of opposites and the marriage of contraries; and that the more mettlesome the charger the more need of a firm rein and a cautious rider. He who overlooks this prime postulate of all sane action in this complex world may pile his democratic house tier above tier and enjoy his green conceit for a season; but the day of sore trial and civic storm is not far, when the rain shall descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, and it will fall, because it was founded upon a dream.

II.

THE CHURCH.

Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι Κύριε, Κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν· ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.—Ὁ ΣΩΤΗΡ.

MAN is characteristically a religious animal; in fact, as Socrates teaches, the only religious animal;[1] for, though a dog has no doubt reverential emotions, it cannot be said with any propriety that he has religious ideas or ecclesiastical institutions, for a very good reason, because he has no ideas at all: observation he has very keen, and memory also wonderfully retentive; instincts also, like all primal vital forces, divine and miraculous; but ideas

[1] τίνος γὰρ ἄλλου ζῴου ψυχὴ πρῶτα μὲν θεῶν τῶν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα συνταξάντων ἤσθηται ὅτι εἰσι: τί δὲ φῦλον ἄλλο ἢ ἄνθρωποι θεοὺς θεραπεύουσι.—Xen. *Mem.* i. 4.

certainly none, for ideas mean knowledge; and brutes that have no language properly so called that is a system of significant vocal signs expressive of ideas, but only cries, gesticulations, and visible or audible signs expressive of sensations and feelings, can by no law of natural analogy be credited with the possession of a faculty of which they give no manifestation. Language is the outward body and form of which thought and reason and knowledge and ideas are the inward soul and force; and hence the wise Greeks, unlike our modern scientists, who delight in confounding man with the monkey, expressed language and reason with one word λόγος, while what we dignify with the name of language in birds and other animals was simply φωνή, or significant voice. If, therefore, there is any thing most human that history has to teach, it must be about religion. All the great nations whose names mark the march of human fates have been religious nations. A people without religion does not exist, or, if it does exist, it

exists only as an abnormal and deficient specimen of the genus to which it belongs, which is of no more account in the just estimate of the type than a fox without a tail, or a lawyer without a tongue; and as for individual atheists, who have been talked about in ancient times, and specially in these latter days, they are either philosophers like Spinoza, the most pious of men, falsely baptized with an odious title from the stupidity, prejudice, or malice of the community, or, if they really are atheists, they are monsters which a man may stare at as at an ass with three heads or with no head at all in a show.

The form in which religion generally presents itself in early history is what we commonly call Polytheism, though it is quite possible—a matter about which I am not careful curiously to dogmatise—that there may have been in some places an original Dualism, like the ancient Persian, or even a Monotheism, out of which the Polytheism was developed. For there cannot be the slightest doubt that, what-

ever may have been the starting-point, there lay in the popular theology a tendency to multiply and to reproduce itself in kindred but not always easily recognisable forms, like the children of a family or the cousinship of a clan. But, taking Polytheism as the type under which history presents the objects of religious faith in the earliest times, we have to remark that under this common name, as in the case of Christianity, the greatest contrasts, both in speculative idea and in social efficiency, stare us everywhere in the face. In the eye of the Christian or the monotheistic devotee the worships of Aphrodite and of Pallas Athene are equally idolatrous; but, allowing that these anthropomorphic forms of divine forces and functions of the universe are equally destitute of a foundation in fact or reason, the reverence paid to them by a devout people might be as different as passion is from thought, and sense from spirit. As the ideal of wisdom in counsel and in action, the Athenian Pallas no doubt exercised as beneficent a

sway over her Hellenic worshippers as the ideal of Christian womanhood, in the person of the Virgin Mary, does at the present day over millions of Christian worshippers. It is only when the cosmic function impersonated in the polytheistic god, being of an inferior order, leaps from its proper position of subordination and usurps the controlling and regulating action belonging to the superior function, that polytheistic idolatry becomes immoral; though, of course, the very facility of this usurpation, and the stamp of a pseudo divinity that may thereby be given to beastly vice, is a sufficient reason for the denunciations of the heathen idolatries so frequent in the Old Testament, which ultimately ripened into the spiritual apostleship and monotheistic aggression of St. Paul. One other striking feature of all polytheistic religions may not be omitted. They are naturally complete — more catholic, more sympathetic with universal nature and universal life than monotheistic religions; if they make a philosophical

mistake in worshipping many gods, they do not make a moral mistake in excluding any of his attributes. With the polytheistic worshipper everything is sacred: the sun and the sea and the sky, dark earth and awful night, excite in him an emotion of reverence. If the Greek polytheist was devout at all, he was devout everywhere; whereas, under monotheistic influences, there is a danger that devout feelings may respond exclusively to the stern decrees of an absolute lawgiver and the awful threatenings of a violated law. Polytheistic piety, whatever its defects, was always ready to add a grace to every innocent enjoyment; monotheistic religiousness, as we see its severe features in some modern churches, contents itself with adding a solemn sanction to the moral law—a severity which here and there has not been able to keep itself free from the unlovely phase of regarding the innocent enjoyments and the graceful pleasantries of life as a sin.

So much for the soul of the business;

the body is what we call the Church. And here the very word is significant. In one sense, as a separate ethical corporation, the ancients had no Church. Why? Because Church and State were one; or, if they were two, they were too like the famous Siamese twins that used to be carried about the country as a show, two so closely connected that they could no more be torn from one another and live than the limpet can be separated from the rock to which it clings. With the peoples of the ancient world the State was the Church and the Church was the State; the priest was a magistrate and the magistrate was a priest. This identity of two things, or loose intercommunion and fusion of two things in modern association so instinctively kept apart, arose from the common germ out of which both Church and State grew—viz., as we saw in the previous lecture, the FAMILY. Every father of a family, in the normal and healthy state of society, is his own priest as well as his own king. In religion and morals, as well as in all

domestic ordinances, he is absolute and supreme; and the functions which necessarily belonged to him as supreme administrator in his own family would, under the influence of family feelings, naturally be conceded to him when the family grew to a clan, and the clan to a kingdom. And this is the state of things which we meet with in the Book of Genesis, long before the promulgation of the Mosaic law, where we read (xiv. 18) that Melchizedek, *king* of Salem, went out to bless Abraham, and he was *priest* of the Most High God; the distinction between priest and layman, to which our ears are so familiar, being in this, as in a thousand other well-known instances, altogether ignored. Not only in Homer, where we find Agamemnon, the king of men, performing sacrificial functions without even the presence of a priest,[1] but in the sober historical age we find the King of Sparta performing all the public sacrifices—being, in fact, in virtue of his office, high priest of

[1] *Iliad*, iii. 271; and compare Virgil, *Æneid*, iii. 80.

Jove.[1] So closely indeed was the State religion identified with the person of the supreme magistrate that, when the kingship was abolished in Greece, and three principal archons and seven secondary ones shared his functions, one still retained the title of *βασιλεύς*, *king*, and had the supervision, or, as we would say, supreme episcopacy and overseership of all matters pertaining to religion.[2] The same thing took place in Rome, where the name of king was even more odious than in Greece; but nevertheless a *rex sacrificulus*, or *king-sacrificer*, with his *regina* or *queen*, took rank in all the public pontifical dinners above the *pontifex maximus* himself. The college of pontiffs in Rome, which had the supreme direction of all religious matters, was not a board of priests, but of laymen—or at least of laymen who, without any qualification but some inaugurating ceremony, might be assumed into the pontifical college; whence the title of *pontifex maxi-*

[1] Xen., *Rep. Lac.*, i. 15; Herod. vi. 56.
[2] Pollux, viii. 90.

mus, which the emperors assumed, was no more of the nature of a usurpation than the title of *imperator*, which belonged to them as supreme commanders of the army. Who, then, were the priests, and what need of them, at all if the laity might legally perform all their functions? The answer is simple. Both in Greece and Rome there were priests and priestly families, as the *Eumolpidæ* in Eleusis, specially dedicated to the service of certain local gods; but there was no order, class, or body of persons having the exclusive right to officiate in sacred matters over the whole community. No doubt the social position of priests in democratic Greece and monarchical Egypt was extremely different, but in one respect they were identical: in Athens Church and State were one as much as in Memphis. In Egypt there was a remarkably strong body or clan of priests enjoying the highest dignities and immunities; but there is no proof that they were a caste, in the strict sense of the word; and their virtues were so far from be-

ing incommunicable that, when the Pharaoh did not happen to be a born priest, but of the military class, he was obliged to be made a priest before he could be a king; and when once king he became *ipso facto* the high priest of the nation, and took precedence of all priests in all great public acts of religious ceremonial. It must not be supposed, however, that, though he was supreme in all sacred matters and the actual head of the Church, to use our language, he could set himself, like our Henry VIII., to carve creeds for the people, and imprison or burn devout persons for refusing to acknowledge his arbitrary decrees. The exercise of sacred functions in the hands of the masterful Tudor and his Machiavelian minister was a usurpation tolerated by a loyal people as their readiest and most effective way of getting rid of the masterdom of the Roman Pope, which in those days pressed like an incubus on the European conscience; it was invoking one devil to turn out another, and was successful, as such opera-

tions are wont to be, in a blundering sort of way. But the worshipful "Sons of the Sun"—for so they were betitled—on the banks of the sweet-watered Nile, had no monstrous pretension of this kind, and could not even have dreamt of it. They did not sit on the throne to reform religion, but to maintain it. Neither in Egypt nor in Greece in those days was any such thing known as the rights of the individual conscience; but both kings and people received religious laws and consuetudes as we do *Magna Charta;* reasonable people, in the long course of the centuries before Christ, would no more dream of disturbing the ancestral belief about the gods than they would think of influencing the settled courses of the stars. It was their very deep-rooted permanency, in the midst of the startling mutabilities to which human affairs are liable, that made the fundamental truths of religion so valuable to their souls; and as to the particular forms under which these fundamental truths might have been symbolised by venerable tradition, the

people were not given to form themselves into hostile camps on the ground of any local difference, as we do in Scotland about ecclesiastical conceits and crotchets; and every devout Egyptian allowed his neighbour without offence to pay sacred honours to a crocodile or a cat, convinced that these honours were equally legitimate and equally beneficial whenever the sacred symbolism peculiar to the worship was wisely understood. Collisions, therefore, between Church and State, or between priesthood and kingship, such as signalised the medieval struggles of the Popes and Emperors, and the convulsions of our infant Protestant freedom in England, could not take place amongst the ancient polytheists. A wise Socrates was equally willing with the most superstitious devotee, when pious gratitude called, to sacrifice a cock to Æsculapius; and the *νόμῳ πόλεως*, by the custom of the State, was the direction which he gave to all who inquired of him by what rites they ought to worship the

gods.[1] Only amongst the Hebrews, as a people in whose religious habitude polytheistic and monotheistic tendencies had never come to any decisive settlement of their inherent antagonism, do I find a record of a very serious collision between Church and State, after the fashion of our German Henries and Transalpine Hildebrands in the days of Papal aggression. Scotsmen familiar with their Bibles will easily see that I allude to the case of Uzziah, as recorded in 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-20:—"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to

[1] Xen., *Mem.* i. 3.

burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him."

So much for Polytheism. That it should have served the spiritual needs of the human heart so long—five thousand years at least, from the first Pharaoh that looked down from his Memphian pyramid on the mystic form of the Sphinx, to the last Roman Emperor that sacrificed white bulls from Clitumnus at the altar of the Capitoline Jove—is proof sufficient that, with all its faults, it was made of very serviceable stuff; but creeds and kingdoms,

like individuals, must die. At the commencement of the eighth century of the Roman Republic heathenism was doomed in all Romanised Europe, in all Northern Africa, and in Western Asia, and that for four reasons. The polytheistic religions of the Old World, created as they were in the infancy of society, no doubt under the guidance of a healthy instinct of dependence on the ruling power of the universe, but in the main inspired by the emotions and formulated by the imagination, without the regulating control of reason, could not hope to hold their ground permanently in the face of that rich growth of individual speculation which, from the sixth century before Christ, spread with such ample ramification from Asiatic and European Greece over the greater part of the civilised world. If it was a necessity of human beings at all times to have a religion, it was a no less urgent problem, as the range of vision enlarged with the process of the ages, to harmonise their theology with their thinking. And if, on

the intellectual side, the polytheistic religions of that cultivated age were threatened with a collapse, the sensuous element, always strongly represented in emotional faiths, was in constant danger of being dragged down into a disturbing and degrading sensuality. Then, again, when the Roman Republic, in the age of Augustus Cæsar, had completed the range of its world-wide conquests, two social forces, unknown in the best ages of Greece and Rome, viz., wealth and luxury, added their perilous momentum to the corrupting elements which were already at work in the bosom of the polytheistic system. And in what a hot-bed of fermenting putridity these evil leavens had resulted at this period, the pages of Suetonius and many chapters in St. Paul are witnesses equally credible and equally tragic. Add to all this the fact that the motley intermixture of ideas and the inorganic confusion and forced assimilation of creeds which, accompanied the universal march of Roman polity, brought about a vague desire for some

sort of religious unity which might run parallel with the political unity under which men lived; and this desire could be gratified only by placing in the foreground the great truth of the unity of the Supreme Being, which to vindicate in pre-Christian ages had been the special mission of the Hebrew race, and which the Greeks themselves had not indistinctly indicated by placing the moral government of the world and the issues of peace and war in the hands of an omnipotent, all-wise, all-beneficent, and absolute Jove. These and the like considerations will lead the thoughtful student of history easily to understand how the appearance of such an extraordinary moral force as Christianity was imperatively called for at the period when our Saviour, with His divine mission to a fallen race, began His preaching on the shores of a lonely Galilean lake; and the most superficial glance at the contents of His preaching, as contrasted with the heathenism which it replaced, will show how wonderful was the new start which

it gave to the moral life of the world, and how effective the spur which it applied to the march of the ages—a spur so potent that we may, without the slightest exaggeration, say that to Christianity we owe almost exclusively whatever mild agencies tempered the harshness and sweetened the sourness of crude government in the Middle Ages; and no less, whatever hopeful elements are at the present moment working among ourselves to save the British people, at a critical stage of their social development, from the decadence and the degradation that overtook the Romans after their great military mission had been fulfilled. Let us look articulately at the main constituents of that new leaven wherewith Christianity was equipped to regenerate the world. These I find to be—

(1.) By asserting in the strongest way the unity of God, it at once cut the root of the tendency in human nature to create arbitrary objects of worship according to the lust or fancy of the worshipper, and accustomed the popular intelligence to a

harmonised view of the various forces at work in the constitution of a world so various and so complex as to a superficial view readily to appear contradictory and irreconcilable.

(2.) By preaching the unity of God, not as an abstract metaphysical idea, but as what it really is, a divine fatherhood, Christianity at one stroke bound all men together as brethren and members of a common family; and in this way, while in the relation of nation to nation it substituted apostleships of love for wars of subjugation, in the relation of class to class it established a sort of spiritual democracy, in which the implied equality of all men as men gradually led to the abolition of the abnormal institution of slavery, on which all ancient society rested.

(3.) Christianity, by starting religion as an independent moral association altogether separate from the State, at once purified the sphere of the Church from corrupting elements, and confined the State within those bounds which the

nature of a civic administration furnishes. Religion in this way was purified and elevated, because in its nicely segregated sphere no secular considerations of any kind could interfere to tone down its ideal, direct its current, or lame its efficiency; while the State, on the other hand, was saved from the folly of intermeddling with matters which it did not understand, and professing principles which it did not believe.

(4.) Christianity, by planting itself emphatically at the very first start, as one may see in the Sermon on the Mount, in direct antagonism to ritualism, ceremonialism, and every variety of externalism, and placing the essence of all true religion in regeneration, or, as St. Paul has it, a new creature—*i.e.* the legitimate practical dominance of the spiritual and ethical above the sensual and carnal part of our nature—broke down the middle wall of partition which had so often divided piety from morality; so that now a man of culture might consistently give his right hand to

religion and his left hand to philosophy, an attitude which, so long as Homer was all that the Greeks had for a bible, no devout Hellenist could assume.

(5.) By placing a firm belief in a future life as a guiding prospect in the foreground, the religion of Christ gave the highest possible value to human life, and the strongest possible spur to perseverance in a virtuous career.

(6.) By appealing directly to the individual conscience, and making religion a matter of personal concern and of moral conviction, it raised the value of each individual as a responsible moral agent, and placed the dignity of every man as a social monad on the firmest possible pedestal.

(7.) By making love its chief motive power, it supplied both the steam and the oil of the social machine with a continuity of moral force never dreamt of in any of the ancient societies—a force which no mere socialistic schemes for organising labour, no boards of health, no political

economy, no mathematical abstractions, no curiosities of physical science, no democratic suffrages, and no school inspectorships, though multiplied a thousand times, apart from this divine agency, can ever hope to achieve.

Thus equipped with a moral armature such as the world had never yet seen, it might have been expected that the triumph of Christianity over the ruins of heathenism would have been as complete and as pure from all admixture of evil as it appears in the great evangelical manifesto commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. But it was not to be so; nor, indeed, created as human nature is, could possibly be. The miraculous virtue of the seed could not change the nature of the soil, and the sweet new wine put into old bottles could not fail to catch a taint from the acid incrustations of the original liquor. *Corruptia optimi pessima* is the great lesson which history everywhere teaches, and nowhere with a more tragic impressiveness than in the history of the Christian Church.

What a rank crop of old wives' fables, endless genealogies, ceremonial observances, worship of the letter, voluntary humilities, and disputations of science, falsely so called, started into fretful array before the spiritual swordsmanship of St. Paul, no reader of the grandest correspondence in the world need be told; but it was not so much from Jewish drivel, Attic subtlety, or Corinthian sensualism, that the corrupting forces were to proceed which in the post-Apostolic age insinuated themselves like a poison into the pure blood of the Church. It is from within that, in moral matters, our great danger flows: if the kingdom of heaven is there, the kingdom of hell is there no less distinctly. The doctrine of Aristotle, and the teaching of history that ALL EXTREMES ARE WRONG, is ever and ever repeated to passion-spurred mortals, and ever and ever forgotten. In the green ardour of our worship we make an idol of our virtue; the strong lines of the particular excellence which we admire are stretched into a

caricature ; our sublime, severed from all root of soundness, reels over into the ridiculous ; we revel and riot and get into an intoxicated excitement with the fruit of our own fancy ; and work ourselves from one stage of inflammation to another, till, as our great dramatist says,

> "Goodness, grown to a pleurisy,
> Dies of its own too much."

The excess into which Christianity at its first start most naturally fell was ultra-spiritualism, asceticism, or by whatever name we may choose to characterise that high-flying system in morals which, not content with the regulation and subordination, aims at the violent subjugation and, as much as may be, the total suppression of the physical element in man. How near this abuse lay is evident, not only from the general tendency of every man to make an idol of his distinctive virtue, and of every sect to delight in the exaggeration of its most characteristic feature, but there are not a few passages of the New Testament which plainly show that the masculine Christianity

of St. Paul had not more occasion to protest against those Greek libertines who turned the grace of God into licentiousness, than against those offshoots of the Jewish Essenes who professed a self-imposed arbitrary religiosity (Col. ii. 18, 23), even forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats (1 Tim. iv. 3).[1] There is, indeed, something very seductive in these attempts to acquire a superhuman virtue, whether they be made by a poet casting off the vulgar bonds that bind him to his fellows, like Percy Bysshe Shelley, that he may feed upon sun-dews and get drunk on transcendental imaginations, or by a religious person, that he may devote himself to spiritual exercises, free from the disturbing influence of earthly passions. Such a renunciation of the flesh gratifies his pride, and has, in fact, the aspect of a heroic virtue in a special line; while, at the same

[1] From the διδαχή τῶν ἀποστόλων, or *Early Teaching of the Apostles*, lately discovered, ch. viii., we learn that it was the custom of the early Christians to observe two days of fasting in the week—Wednesday and Friday. —Edit. Oxford Parker, 1885.

time, it is with some persons more convenient, inasmuch as when the resolution is once formed and a decided start made, it is always easier to abstain than to be moderate. Nevertheless, all such ambitious schemes to ignore the body and to cut short the natural rights of our physical nature must fail. It never can be the virtue of a man to wish to be more than man ; and every religion which sets a stamp of special approval on superhuman, and therefore unhuman, virtue, erects a wall of separation between the gospel which it preaches and the world which it should convert. In fact, it rather gives up the world in despair, and institutes an artificial school for the practice of certain select virtues, which only a few will practise, and which, when practised, can only make those few unfit for the social position which Providence meant them to occupy.

The second excess into which Christianity, under the action of frail human nature, easily ran was intolerance. This intolerance, as in the previous case, is

only a virtue run to seed; for, as all asceticism is merely a misapplication or an exaggeration of the virtue of self-denial and self-control, so all intolerance, or defect of kindly regard to the contrary in opinion or conduct, is merely a crude or an impolitic extension of the imperative OUGHT which lies at the root of all moral truth, and specially of all monotheistic religions. There is, indeed, a certain intolerance in truth which will not allow it to hold parley with error; and every new religion with a lofty inspiration, conscious of a divine mission, is necessarily aggressive: it delights to pluck the beard of ancestral authority, and marches right into the presence of hoary absurdity and consecrated stupidity. No doubt there is a boundary here which the divine wisdom of the Son of God pointed at emphatically enough when he was asked to bring down fire from heaven on those who taught or did otherwise; but the evil spirit of self-importance which prompted this request was too deeply engrained in human nature to

be eradicated by a single warning of the great teacher. This spirit of arrogant individualism asserted itself at an early period in the disorderly Corinthian Church very much in the same way as it does amongst ourselves, specially in Scotland, at the present moment — viz. by the multiplication of sects, the exaggeration of petty distinctions, and the fomenting of petty rivalries, — "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. i. 12),—a spirit which the apostle most strongly denounces as proceeding manifestly from the over-rated importance of some secondary specialty, or some accessory condition, of the body of believers, who thus clubbed themselves into a denomination, and resulting in an unkindly divergence from the common highway of evangelic life, and an intolerant desire to override one Christian brother with the private shibboleth of another, and to stamp him with the seal of their own conceit. The field in which this intolerant

spirit displayed itself was of course different, according to the influences at work at the time; but there is one field which, if church history is to teach us anything, we are bound to emphasise strongly, that is the field of dogma; for, if there be any influence that has worked more powerfully to discredit Christianity than even the immoral lives and selfish maxims of professing Christians, it is the fixation and glorification and idol-worship of the dogma. No doubt Christianity is far from being that system, or rather no system, of vague and cloudy sentiment to which some persons would reduce it: it has bones, and a firm framework; it stands upon facts, and is not without doctrines, but it does not make a parade of doctrines; and the faith which it enjoins, as is manifest from the definition and historical examples in Hebrews xi., is not an intellectual faith in the doctrines of a metaphysical theology, but a living faith in the moral government of the world and a heroic conduct in life, as the necessary expression of such faith.

The mere intellectual orthodoxy on which the Christian Church has, by the tradition of centuries, placed such a high value, is, in the apostolical estimate, plainly worth nothing; for the devils also believe and tremble, as St. James has it, or as our Lord himself said in the striking summation to the Sermon on the Mount, "Not they who call me *Lord, Lord*, shall enter into the kingdom, but they who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. By their works, not by their creed, ye shall know them."[1] Nevertheless, the exaltation of the dogma has always been a favourite tendency of the Church, and the besetting sin of the clergy. With the mass of the people, to swear to a curious creed is always more easy than to lead a noble life; while to the clerical intellect it must always give a secret satisfaction to think that the science of theology, which is the furthest removed

[1] In the διδαχή τῶν ἀποστόλων there is absolutely no dogma. It is all practice, and this is quite in harmony with the use of διδαχή by St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 10), and indeed with the whole tone of these two admirable epistles.

from the handling of the great mass of men, has in their hands assumed a well-defined shape, of which the articulations are as subtle and as necessary as the steps of solution in a difficult algebraic problem. The late Baron Bunsen, for many years Prussian ambassador in London, one of the most large-minded and large-hearted of Christian men, in the preface to his great *Bibel werk*, devotes a special chapter to Dogmatism as a vice of the clerical mind leading to false views of Scripture; over and above what he calls the modern revival of scholastic theology in Germany, he enumerates four dominant epochs of ecclesiastical life in which this anti-evangelical tendency has prominently asserted itself. These are—(1) the dogmatism of the great Church councils in the reigns of Constantine, Theodosius, and Justinian; (2) the medieval scholasticism of the Western Church; (3) the Protestant scholasticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; (4) the dogmatism of the Jesuits, Perron, Bossuet, and others. Had

this dogmatic tendency of the Church contented itself with tabulating a curious scheme of divine mysteries, though it might justly have been deemed impertinent, and here and there a little presumptuous, yet it might have been condoned lightly as a sort of clerical recreation in hours which might have been worse employed; but it could not be content with this: it passed at once into action, and in this guise prevailed to deface the fair front of the Church with gashes of more bloody and barbarous inhumanity than ever marked the altars of the Baals and Molochs of the most savage heathen superstitions.

Another monstrous abuse born out of the bosom of the Church, though not so directly, is Sacerdotalism. I say not so directly, because the genius of Christianity is so distinctly negative of all priesthood that, had there been even an express prohibition of it, its contradiction to the whole tone of the New Testament could not have been more apparent. Not more certainly are the sacrifices of the

Jewish law abolished in the sacrifice of Christ, according to the Pauline theology, than the Levitical priesthood stands abolished in the priesthood of Christ and in the priesthood of the individual members of his spiritual body (2 Peter v. 9).[1] Whence, then, came our Christian priesthood? Partly, I suspect, as the Jewish Sabbath was interpolated into the Christian Lord's Day, from the nearness and external similitude of the two things—the presbyter being to the outward eye pretty much the same as the priest was to the Jewish worshippers; partly from the self-importance which is the besetting sin of all bodies of men prominently planted in the social platform, and which induces them to magnify their vocation, and in doing so stilt their professional pride up into the attitude of a very stately and a very reputable virtue. The proper functions of the office-bearers

[1] In the διδαχή τῶν ἀποστόλων, c. xiii., the "*prophets*" are said to be to Christians what the "*high priests*" were to the Jews,—a phraseology which could not possibly have been used had any priesthood, in the Hebrew sense, existed in the early Church.

of the early Christian Church, call them overseers, bishops, or what you will, were so honourable and so beneficent that, especially with an unlearned and unthinking people, the reverential respect due to the actors might easily pass into a superstitious belief in the mystical virtue of the operations of which they were the conductors; and this ready submission on the part of the people, holding out a willing hand to the natural self-importance and potentiated self-estimate of the clerical body, resulted in a four-square system of sacerdotal control, sacerdotal virtue, and sacerdotal influence, to which we shall search for a parallel in vain through all the annals of Asiatic and African heathenism. Nay, I can readily believe that those who can find a priesthood in the genius of the gospel and the apostolic institution of the Christian Church, will naturally be inclined to maintain that the superior power of the Gregories, Bonifaces, and Innocents of the medieval Church, as contrasted with any-

thing that we read or know of the Egyptian, Hebrew, and Roman pontiffs, is the natural and necessary outcome of the superior excellence of the Christian religion; and this, no doubt, is the only comfortable belief on which all forms of Christian sacerdotalism can repose.

So much for the corruptions of the Christian religion proceeding from what, in theological language, might be called the indwelling sin of the Church, unstimulated by any strong external seduction. But this seduction came. After three centuries of hardship, manfully endured in the school of adversity, the more severe trial of prosperity had to be gone through. The Church, which had been declared to be not of this world, and had stood face to face with the greatest political power the world ever knew in a position of sublime moral isolation, was now adopted by the State, and formed a bond of the most intimate connection with its hereditary persecutors. The starting-point of the oldest heathen social atti-

tude, the identity of Church and State, seemed to be recalled; and a Justinian on the shores of the Bosphorus seemed as really a head of the Church as a Menes or an Amenophis on the banks of the Nile. But under the outward likeness a radical difference lay concealed. As an essentially ethical society, with its own special credentials, its separate history, and its independent triumph, the Christian Church might form an alliance with a purely secular institution like the State, but it could not be absorbed or identified with it. That alliance might be made beneficially in various ways and on various terms; the civil magistrate might be proud to be called the friend and the brother of the Christian bishop, or he might humble himself to be its servant, but he never could be its master. The alliance therefore was, as it ought to be, all in favour of the spiritual body; the Church gained the civil power to execute its decrees and to patronise its missions; but a Christian State could never gain

the right to dictate the creed or perform the functions of the Church. The idea that there is anything absolutely sinful, or necessarily pernicious, in the conception of an alliance between the Church and the State, is one of those hyperconscientious crotchets of modern British sectarianism at which the Muse of history can only smile. There can be no greater sin in an Established Church than in an Established University or an Established Royal Academy. Religion and Science and Art have their separate and well-marked provinces, in the administration of which they may wisely seek for the co-operation, though they will always jealously avoid the dictation, of the State. But, though there could be no sin in the Church receiving the right hand of fellowship from the State, there might be danger, and that of a very serious description. Nothing strikes a man so much in the reading of the New Testament as the little respect which it pays to riches and the pomp and pride of life, and worldly honours and dignities

of all kinds. "*How can ye believe who receive honour one from another?*" is a sentence that cuts very deep into the connection between the Church and State, which might readily mean the alliance of a secular institution, delighting in pomp and parade and glittering show, with a religion of which, like the philosophy of the porch, the most prominent feature was unworldliness, humility, and spirituality. Here unquestionably was danger: an alliance in which, as in an ill-consorted marriage, the lower element was as likely to drag down the higher as the higher to lift up the lower. And so it actually happened. The Church was secularised. Alongside of the hundred and one monkeries of stolid asceticism and the hundred and one mummeries of sacerdotal ceremonialism, there grew up in the process of the ages a consolidated hierarchy of such concentrated, secular, and sacred potency that the loftiest crowned heads of Europe ducked beneath its shadow and quailed beneath its ban. To understand this, we must take note of the

change by which the scattered presbyters of the primitive Church were gradually massed into a strong aristocracy, which in due season, after the fashion of the State, found its key-stone in an ecclesiastical monarch. It was the wisdom of the founders of the Christian Church not to lay down any fixed norm of official administration, but to leave all the external machinery of a purely spiritual institution free to adapt itself to the existing forms of society as time and circumstance and national genius might demand. The form of government natural to the Church in its earliest stages was democratic, with a certain loose, ill-defined element of presidential aristocracy. But in an age which had bidden a long farewell both to the spirit and the form of democracy in civil administration, such a form of government in the Church could not hope to maintain itself. Under the influence of the magnificent autocracy of Rome in its decadence, the simple overseer or superintendent (ἐπίσκοπος) of a remote provincial congregation

of believers gradually grew into a metropolitan dignitary, and culminated in the wielder of a secular sovereignty sitting in council with the most influential monarchs of Europe. The epiphany of an absolute monarch with a triple tiara on his head when contrasted with the simplicity and unworldliness of the primitive bishops wears such a strange look that it has been judged, especially in Protestant countries, with a more sweeping severity than it deserved. As a mere form of government, no man can give any good reason why the Church should not be governed by a monarch as well as the State; the bishop of Rome, as supreme head of the body of bishops all over Christendom, and guided by them as his habitual advisers, was at least as natural and as reasonable a guide for the direction of the conscience of Christendom in the Middle Ages as the Council of Protestants who at Dort, in the year 1618, condemned the greatest theologian and jurist of the day to pine in a Dutch prison, or the Assembly of Divines in Westminster who

empowered the supreme magistrate to suppress the right of free thought in the breasts of all persons who were not prepared to set their seal to the damnatory dogmas of extreme Calvinism. Nay, so far from there being anything anti-Christian or anti-social in the Popedom as a form of Church government, we may safely say that in ages of general turmoil, confusion, and violence, the admitted supremacy of the visible head of a church founded on principles of peace and conciliation could not act otherwise than beneficially. But when the person in whom this moral supremacy was vested became the acknowledged head of a secular princedom, the case was altered. It was an unhappy day for the Christian Church, the most unhappy day perhaps in its whole eventful history, when Pepin, the ambitious minister of the last of the Merovingian kings, in the year 751, contrived to get out of Pope Zachary a spiritual sanction for his usurption of his master's throne. From that moment the Church was doomed to a blazing and brilliant,

but a sure career of downfall. The spiritual abetter of a secular crime had to be rewarded for his pious subserviency: he received the exarchate of Ravenna, and became a temporal prince. From that time forward the head of the Christian Church, who ought to have stood before the world as a model of all purity, truthfulness, peacefulness, and ethical nobility, was condemned to serve two masters, God and Mammon, unworldly morality and worldly power, which was impossible. From this time forward there was not a single court intrigue in Europe, nor a single plot of any knot of conspirators, into whose counsels the supreme bishop of the gospel of peace might not be dragged, or, what is worse, into whose lawless and ungodly machinations he might not be officially thrusting himself, in order to preserve some accessory interest or gain some paltry advantage altogether unconnected with his spiritual function. If there is any one element, always of course excepting the element of gross sensuality and absolute villainy,

which more than another is adverse to the spirit of Evangelical Christianity, it is the element of court intrigue, political contention, and party feuds. In this region love, which is the life of the regenerate soul, cannot breathe; truth is put under ban; lies flourish; conscience is smothered; and low expediency everywhere takes the place of lofty principle. So it fared not seldom with the Popes; and much worse in the last degree; for wickedness, like everything that lives, must live by growing, and the seed of secular ambition which was sown in lies, will grow to robbery, blossom in lust, and ripen into murder. This anywhere, but specially in Italy, where from the time of the patrician Scipio, who suppressed the elder Gracchus, the hot contenders for absolute power, in the eager pursuit of their object, have never shrank from the free use of the assassin's dagger and the poisoner's bowl. In fact, if the love of mere animal pleasure makes a man a beast, it is the love of power that translates him into a

fiend; and of this sort of human fiends Italian history presents as appalling a register as can be found anywhere in the annals of our race; and at the top of this register stand some of the Popes, whose names are as prominent in the story of ecclesiastical Rome as those of Nero, Domitianus, and Heliogabalus are in the story of the imperial decadence. When we cast a rapid glance—for it deserves nothing more—on the revolting record of the Roman Popes in the age immediately preceding the Reformation, we hear the solemn voice of history repeating again the maxim above quoted—*corruptio optimi pessima:* when priests are bad, they are very bad; when the salt of the gospel, which was meant to preserve the moral life of society from putrescence, has lost its savour, if not cast out, it is worse than useless—it becomes a poison.

Before proceeding to the modern history of the Church, we ought to emphasise in a special paragraph the fact that one unfortunate result of the incorporation of the

Church with the State was that the Church was now in a position to request the State to lend its potent aid in establishing the true doctrine of the gospel and suppressing all heresies. That the State had a right to do so no man doubted; even in democratic Greece free-thinking philosophers, such as Anaxagoras, Diogenes, and Socrates, were banished or suffered death on charges of impiety; and though, no doubt, political elements, as in the case of the Arminians in Holland, worked along with the strictly religious feeling to set the brand of atheism on those men, there cannot be any doubt that where the State and the Church were so essentially one, persecutions for unauthorised religious observances were perfectly legitimate, as indeed the memorable case of the forcible suppression of the Dionysiac mysteries, more than two hundred years before the earliest of the Christian martyrdoms in Rome, abundantly testifies. But there was a double horror in the religious persecution, after the establishment of Christianity, now

inaugurated for the first time—the horror of a conduct so diametrically opposed to the spirit and the express injunction of the Founder of the Gospel, in whose defence it was practised, and the horror also that what was now violently suppressed was not, as in the case of the Dionysiac mysteries, rather immoral practices than erroneous beliefs, but simply and nakedly metaphysical objections against metaphysical propositions in theology, which, whether true or false, could not be made the subject of State action, or, in my opinion at least, of ecclesiastical censure, without a flagrant violation of that law of charity which a large philosophy and a catholic Christianity equally enjoin. The banishment of Arius to Illyria, as the civil consequence of the formal signature of the Trinitarian creed by the decision of the Council of Nice in the year 325, though it made no small noise in the world in those days, was a very innocent overture to the barbarous dramas of fire and blood that were in after ages to be enacted on this

evil precedent. There are many grand places rich with historical lessons in London, and not a few sad ones; but the saddest of all is Smithfield. I can never pace the stones of this memorable site, where our noblest Scot, Sir William Wallace, was disembowelled and quartered to gratify the vengeance of an imperious Norman, without thinking of the sad fate of the young and beautiful Anne Askew. This lady, the daughter of a knight of good family in Lincolnshire, under some of those stimulants of thought which were stirring up the stagnant traditions of medieval piety, had been led to conceive serious doubts with regard to the Scripture authority for some of the most universally received doctrines of the Roman Church. This pious scepticism coming to the ears of certain leading persons in Church and State, who, after the example of the Nicean doctors, considered it a sacred duty in matters pertaining to religion to tolerate no contradiction, first brought this lady before the Lord Chancellor, who tore her limb from

limb on the rack, because she would not say that she believed what she could not believe without denying her senses, and then dragged her to the blood-stained pavement of Smithfield, where she was girt with gunpowder bags and fenced with faggots, to be burnt to death, as if the God of Christians were a second and enlarged edition of the old Moloch of Palestine. And what was her offence — beautiful, young, pure, and truthful woman, not more than twenty-five years of age — that she should be treated in this worse than cannibalic style in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Simply that Henry VIII., in that style of insolent masterdom which he showed so royally, and conceiting himself, like a Scotch fool who came after him, to be a considerable theologian, assumed the right to put the stamp of absolute kingship on the doctrine of the Church that a piece of bread, over which a priestly benediction had been pronounced by a priest, was by the mystical virtue of this benediction changed into flesh, while the fair

young lady persisted in seeing nothing but bread. Let it be granted that the lady was in the wrong and the churchly tradition right, it never could be right to tear her flesh to shreds and to burn her bones to ashes because she held an opinion which, to say the least of it, looked as like the truth as its opposite. How sad, how sorrowfully sad, and what a commentary on what we are ever and anon tempted to call poor, pitiful, prideful, and presumptuous human nature, that Christianity had at that time been more than fifteen hundred years in the world, sitting in high places, and walking with triumphal banners over the earth, and yet neither the princes of the earth nor the rulers of the Church should have retained even a slight echo of that reproof from a mild Master to a zealous disciple, to the effect that no man who knew the spirit of the divine religion which He taught, would ever propose to bring fire down from heaven or up from hell to consume the unbeliever.

Such enormities in the doctrine and

practice of the Church, as we have indicated rather than described, could lead to only one of two issues—Reform or Revolution. The change brought about, though contenting itself with the milder name, was in fact the more drastic procedure. The European reformation of Martin Luther in 1517 was a revolution in the Church, much more radical and much more worthy of so strong a designation than the political revolution of 1688 in Great Britain. It is needless to recapitulate the causes of offence; they were only too patent—insolence, secularity, sensuality, venality, idleness, vice, and worthlessness of every kind in the Church; but there were two causes which, in addition to corruption from within, tended to open the ears of Christendom largely to the cry for Church reform. These were the stir in the intellectual movement from the days of the author of the Divine Comedy downwards, enforced by the invention of printing in the middle of the fifteenth century, which was amply sufficient to become a danger to even a

much less vulnerable creed than that which had satisfied the crude demands of mediæval intelligence; and, in the second place, the hostility which the insolence and ambition of Churchmen had roused in the secular magistracy—that is, not only the monarch and his official ministers, but the great body of the higher nobility who found themselves ousted from their place in the familiar counsels of the monarch by the advocates and ambassadors of a foreign potentate. Thus the two best friends of every Established Church in its normal state were converted into enemies; and the natural indignation of the common people at the licentious lives and gross venality of the clergy was stimulated into an explosion by the desire of the secular dignities to curb the pride of the clergy, and, it might lightly happen also, to rob them of part of their overgrown wealth, nominally for the public good, really for the aggrandisement of the Crown and the nobility. The shameless nepotism of Pope Sixtus IV., the flagitious lives and abhor-

rent practices of the Borgias, more fit for a sensational melodrama in the lowest Parisian theatre than for the home of a Christian bishop; the military rage of a Julius, who turned the Church of Christ into a travelling camp and the bishop's crozier into a soldier's sword; the literary dilettantism of the Court of Leo X., more eager to distinguish itself by the elegant trimming of Latin versicles than by apostolic zeal and Christian purity,—all this, so long as it disported itself on Italian ground, the aristocracy of England and Scotland might have continued to look on with indifference; but that the son of anybody or nobody, in a county of unvalued clodhoppers, should jostle them in the antechamber of the monarch, and claim precedence in the hall of audience, simply because he was the supple instrument of an insolent Italian priest, this was not to be borne; and so the Reformation came, with the mob of the lowest classes, the mass of the respectable middle classes, the most influential of the nobility, and the

power of the Crown, all in full cry against the ecclesiastical fox. The revolution thus volcanically effected, and known in history under the name of Protestantism, meant simply the right of every individual member of the Christian Church to take the principles and the practice of his Church directly from the original records of the Church, without the intervention of any body of authorised interpreters; and the necessary product of this right when exercised was first to declare certain practices and doctrines that had grown up in the Church through long centuries to be unauthorised departures from the original simplicity and purity of the gospel; and, further, to deny that there existed in the Christian Church, as originally constituted, any class or caste of men enjoying the exclusive privilege to perform sacred functions, and endowed with a divine virtue to perform sacramental miracles by their consecrating touch,—in a word, that there was no priesthood, properly so called, in the Reformed Christian Church. Nor is

this doctrine, as some may think, the teaching only of the Helvetic confession, what certain persons have been fond to call extreme Protestantism; for, though the word priest has been retained in the English prayer-book as a minister in sacred things of a particular grade and exercising a particular function, the attempt made by Archbishop Laud and the Romanising party in the Reformed Church of England to retain in the bosom of the Anglican Church the ideas which the ancient Jews and the Romish Christians attached to the word *priest*, proved a signal failure; and for the sacerdotal despotism which it implied, as well as for the secular despotism which the priest advised and encouraged the unfortunate king to assert, the adviser and the advised justly lost their heads. Of all the teachings of Church history, from the Waldenses in the twelfth century down to the present hour, there is nothing more certain than this, that between Popery and Protestantism there is no middle term possible. They may agree, in fact they

do agree, in many essential things, and in a few accidental; but in the fundamental principle of Church administration they are diametrically opposed. The principle of the one is sacerdotal authority, absolute and unqualified; the principle of the other is individual and congregational liberty. The one form of polity is a close oligarchy, the other either a free democracy or an aristocracy more or less penetrated by a democratic spirit.

The practical outcome of this great Protestant movement, in the midst of which we live, cannot fail to a reasonable eye to appear in the highest degree satisfactory. Never was the life of the Christian Church at once more intensely earnest and more expansively distributive than at the present moment. On the one hand, the Roman Church, wisely taught by the experience of the past, though obstinately cleaving to that stout conservatism of doctrine and ritual inherent in the very bones of all sacerdotal religions, has been, in the main, studious to avoid those

causes of offence from which the great rupture proceeded. On the other hand, the Protestant Churches, shaken free from the distracting influence of sacerdotal assumption and secular ambition, have found themselves in a condition to permeate all classes of society with a moral virtue, of whose regenerative action Plato and Socrates, in their best hours, could not have dreamed. Some people, while gladly admitting the immense amount of social good that is done by the various sections of the Protestant Church, never cease to sigh for a lost ecclesiastical unity, and to lament the unseemly strifes that arise among those that should be possessed by one spirit and strive together for a common end. But the persons who speak thus are either sentimental weaklings, being Protestants, or are Romanists and sacerdotalists in their heart. Variety is the law of nature in the moral no less than in the physical world; and the absorption of all sects into one results in a stagnation which will never be found amongst moral beings,

unless when produced by weakness of vital force from within, or unnatural suppression from above. The two dominant types of church polity recognised in this country since the Reformation — the Episcopal and the Presbyterian — of which the one boasts a more aristocratic intellectual culture, and the other a more fervid and forcible popular action, may well be allowed to exist together on a mutual understanding of giving and taking whatever is best in each, and thus, in apostolic language, provoking one another to love and to good works. Competition is for the public benefit as much in churches as in trades. Dissent from any dominant body, even though it may proceed from the exaggerated importance given to a secondary matter, will always produce the good result that the dominant body will thereby be stirred to greater activity and greater watchfulness; so that, in this view, we may lay it down as one of the great lessons of history that the best form of church government is a strong

establishment qualified by a strong dissent. As to the proposals which have in recent times been made for the formal separation of Church and State, they bear on their face more of a political than of a religious significance. Impartial history offers no countenance to the notion that Established Churches, when well flanked by dissent, and in an age when the spiritual ruler has ceased to make the arm of the State the tool of intolerance, are contrary either to piety or to policy; and in the desire so loudly expressed at election contests to lay violent hands on the valuable organism of church agency existing in this country, the venerated inheritance of many ages of patriotic struggle, the student of history, with a charitable allowance for the best motives in not a few, feels himself constrained to suspect in all such movements no small admixture of sectarian jealousy, fussy religiosity, and domineering democracy. Christianity, of course, stands in no need of an Established Church; religion existed for three hundred

years in the church without any State connection, and may exist again; but Christianity does, above all things, abhor the stirring up of strife betwixt Church and Church from motives of jealousy, envy, or greed; and, along with the highest philosophy and the most far-sighted political wisdom, must protest in the strongest terms against the abolishing of a useful ethical institution to gratify the insane lust of levelling in a mere numerical majority.

The Church of the future, whether established or disestablished, or, as I think best, both together, provoking one another to love and to good works, has a great mission before it, if it keep sharply in view the two lessons which the teaching of eighteen centuries so eloquently enforces. Our evangelists must remove from the van of their evangelic force all that sharp fence of metaphysical subtlety and scholastic dogma, which, being ostentatiously paraded in creeds and catechisms, has given more just offence to those without than edification to those within

the Church; the gospel must be presented to the world with all that catholic breadth, kindly humanity, and popular directness which were its boast before it was laced and screwed into artificial shapes by the decrees of intolerent councils, and the subtleties of ingenious schoolmen. And, again, they must not allow the gospel to be handled, what is too often the case, as a mere message of hope and comfort in view of a future world; but they must make it walk directly into the complex relations of modern society, and think that it has done nothing till the ideal of sentiment and conduct which it preached on Sunday has been more or less practised on Monday. In fact, there ought to be less vague preaching on Sunday, and more specific and direct application through the week of gospel principle in various spheres of the intellectual and moral life of the community. If, in addition to this, our prophets of the pulpit take care to keep abreast of the intellectual movement of the age, so as not only to stir

the world in sermons, but to guide them in the wisdom of daily life, they have nothing to fear from all the windy artillery that the speculations of a soulless physical science, the imaginations of a dreamy socialism, or the dogmatism of a cold philosophical formalism, can bring to bear upon them. Let them grapple bravely with all social problems, and prove whether Christianity, which has done so much to purify the motives of individuals, may not be able also to put a more effective steam into the machinery of society. If they shall fail here, they will fail gloriously, having done their best. It is not given to any people, however great, to solve all problems. When Great Britain shall have played out her part, there will be scope enough in the process of the ages for another stout social worker to place the cornice on the edifice of which she was privileged to raise the pillars.

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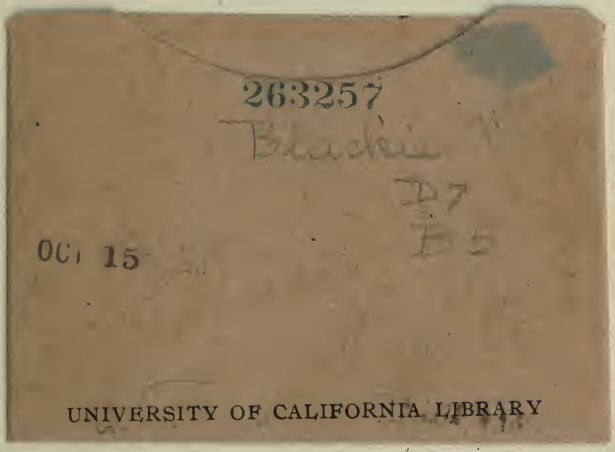
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